

Message Text

SECRET

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62

ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSCE-00 NSC-10 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 EUR-10 PRS-01 SPC-03 PM-03 DODE-00

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R 041116Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 325

S E C R E T BANGKOK 1573

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, RB, CH

SUBJECT: CHINESE SEIZURE OF THE PARACELS

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION MANILA, INFO JAKARTA, KUALA LUMPUR,
MOSCOW, SAIGON, SINGAPORE TAIPEI, TOKYO, HONG KONG, PEKING,
DIA, CINCPAC DATED JANUARY 29,

QUOTE

S E C R E T BANGKOK 1573

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, RP, CH

SUBJECT: CHINESE SEIZURE OF THE PARACELS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

REF: MANILA 775

1. WE ARE INTRIGUED BY AMBASSADOR SULLIVAN'S THEORY
THAT THE CHINESE MAY HAVE EXERCIZED THEIR HISTORIC
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CLAIM TO ALL OF THE PARACELS IN ORDER TO PREEMPT A

SOVIET NAVY LEASE ARRANGEMENTS, POSSIBLY THROUGH NORTH VIETNAM. SINCE THE CHINESE HAVE LONG REGARDED THE SOVIET UNION AS THEIR PRINCIPAL EXTERNAL THREAT, PARANOIA ABOUT THE PARACELS WOULD NOT SEEM ILLOGICAL.

2. A COUPLE OF FACTORS SEEM TO OFFER SOME QUIBBLE TO THIS THEORY. THOSE OF US FLYING FROM HONG KONG TO POINTS WEST, WHOSE COMMERCIAL AIRLINE CAPTAINS HAVE POINTED OUT THE PARACELS BELOW, HAVE NOTED THAT THEY LOOK, FROM THE ADMITTEDLY HAZY ALTITUDE OF SEVERAL MILES, AS CORAL REEFS WITH MINIMAL LAND SURFACE AND NO VEGETATION. WITH THEIR HOLLOW CENTERS, SOME OF THEM ARE REMINISCENT OF INNER TUBES. WE HAVE HEARD ELSEWHERE THAT THERE IS NO DRINKING WATER TO BE FOUND ON ANY OF THEM. ALTHOUGH SOME ARMY BASES IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE US HAVE A REPUTATION FOR MINIMAL AMMENITIES, WE UNDERSTAND THAT NAVIES ARE ACCUSTOMED TO THE CREATURE COMFORTS AND WOULD NOT FIND THE PARACELS A PARTICULARLY USEFUL OR HOSPITABLE HAVEN.

3. THE OTHER MITIGATING FACTOR IS THE RECENT CHINESE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL ITS HEAVY ARTILLERY AND MANY OF ITS TROOPS FROM ITS EXTENSIVELY DEVELOPED ROAD NETWORK IN NORTHWEST LAOS. PRESUMABLY THE CHINESE ARE FEARFUL OF THE RUSSIANS EVERYWHERE. THEY THUS SHOULD BE EVEN MORE HESITANT ABOUT GIVING THE SOVIETS ACCESS TO LAOS (WITH ITS CONTIGUOUS BORDER WITH CHINA) THROUGH THE NORTH VIETNAMESE THAN THEY WOULD BE ABOUT THE PARACELS.

4. THERE ARE TWO OTHER POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS THAT COME TO MIND FOR THE CHINESE MOVE. ONE IS SIMPLY A QUESTION OF FACE. SOUTH VIETNAM A FEW MONTHS AGO ARRESTED SOME CHINESE FISHERMEN WHO STRAYED TOO CLOSE TO ONE OF THE VIETNAMESE INHABITED ISLANDS. THE CHINESE COULD MERELY BE FLEXING THEIR MILITARY MUSCLE AND ASSERTING THEIR SOVEREIGNTY IN A QUARTER WHERE THE CHALLENGE COULD NOT PROVE SERIOUS.

5. A FINAL POSSIBILITY IS THAT THE CHINESE NAVY IS JUST FOLLOWING THE LITTLE RED BOOK. ONE OF MAO TSE
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TUNG'S MORE FAMOUS QUOTATIONS IS: "COW MANURE IS MORE VALUABLE THAN DOGMA". THE PARACELS AFTER ALL ARE STEEPED IN GUANO.
KINTNER UNQUOTE
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